INDIA

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This Supplement consists of a FULL Report, specially drawn up for "India," of the Debates on Indian subjects in both Houses of Parliament, and questions put on such subjects and the answers given to them, arranged chronologically, from February 25th to March 25th.

Imperial Parliament.

February 25th.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE CLOSING OF THE MINTS.

Sir HENRY MEYSEY-THOMPSON asked the Secretary of State for India whether any coins had been struck at the Indian Mints either for the Government or anyone else since the date when the privilege of getting rupees coined was withdrawn from the public.

Lord GEORGE HAMILTON: The only coins which have been struck at the Indian Mints since June, 1893 (with the exception of the coinage of silver in transit at that time) are (1) silver coins representing fractions of the rupee, to the value of of Rx. 504,624; (2) copper coins for the Indian Government, for native States, for the British East Africa Company, and for the Straits and Ceylon Governments; and (3) British dollars, for Eastern trade, at the request of the Colonial Office.

HEALTH OF BRITISH TROOPS.

Mr. ROBERT CAMERON asked the Secretary of State for India if he would state what were the terms of the reference to the Departmental Committee now sitting on the subject of venereal disease among British troops in India:

Whether the evidence taken by the Committee would be circulated as soon as complete:

And, whether the House would be afforded an opportunity of discussing the question before any action was taken by the Imperial or the Indian Governments.

Lord GEORGE HAMILTON: The terms of reference were as follows: "To examine the official returns of venereal disease among British troops stationed in India, and to report what changes, if any, have taken place during recent years in the prevalence of such disease and in its character and intensity; also, to obtain and report any information which may be available with regard to the presence of venereal disease and its character and intensity among foreign armies." The report is now under my consideration, and will be published. The evidence on which it is founded being almost entirely documentary, has not been separately recorded, but is embodied or referred to in the Report. I am at present unable to say what course may be taken by Her Majesty's Government; but, undoubtedly, the House will have an opportunity of discussing any decision we may arrive at.

March 1st.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.

GODAVERI RIVER NAVIGATION WORKS.

Mr. PRICE asked the Secretary of State for India whether his attention had been drawn to the statement of Sir Arthur Cotton, as published in the "Friend of China," that the Godaveri River might at this moment be pouring rice into the famine districts of the North in immense quantities, at a nominal cost of carriage of one penny a bushel, if only the several pieces of canal in the 1,000 miles between were united, which they might be for the cost of 20 miles of railway;

And, whether the Indian Government would consider the advisability of shortly undertaking the necessary works.

Lord GEORGE HAMILTON: The Godaveri River navigation works, to which the hon. member's question relates, were carefully considered by the Government of the Central Provinces, the Government of India, and the Secretary of State in Council in 1871; and all these authorities agreed that the works should not be proceeded with. The large expenditure involved would have been out of all proportion, not only to the prospects of traffic, but to the amount of protection from famine which the undertaking might have afforded. There is no reason to believe that the Government of India have any intention of now proceeding with the scheme.

HEALTH OF BRITISH TROOPS.

Captain PIRIE asked the Secretary of State for India if he could give any information as to the precise date of publication of the Report of the Departmental Committee on the health of the British troops in India, which was at present under his consideration.

Lord GEORGE HAMILTON: I have nothing to add to the answers I have already made to this question.

THE "WARREN HASTINGS."

Mr. PERCY THORNTON asked the Secretary of State for India whether similar compensation for the loss of property would be allowed to the officers and crew wrecked in the royal Indian marine ship *Warren Hastings* as that granted to the troops who were on board when the catastrophe occurred.

Lord GEORGE HAMILTON: Compensation is admissible for loss of property by shipwreck, and will be allowed to the officers and men of the royal Indian marine ship *Warren Hastings*. (Cheers.)

Mr. THORNTON: Whereas those most active in saving life suffered the most in loss of property, not having time to attend to such matters. I desire to ask a question regarding a concrete case which I can vouch for, and I believe not to be isolated. Will the noble lord give consideration to the case of Lieutenant Walter Wyndham, who was the first man to take a rope over the bow and reach the land, afterwards saving five lives from drowning, and being recommended for the Humane Society's medal by Commander Holland. He has lost all his property which was on the ship.

Lord GEORGE HAMILTON: No doubt the exceptional conduct of Lieutenant Wyndham will be considered, but I do not think it would entitle him to special compensation for the loss of his property.

Mr. THORNTON: These men have lost everything they had,

March 2nd.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

NET INCOME AND EXPENDITURE.

On the motion of Sir H. H. Fowler, a Return was granted showing the net income and expenditure of British India, under certain specified heads for the eleven years from 1885-6 to 1895-6.

THE CASH BALANCES.

Mr. Herbert Roberts asked the Secretary of State for India whether he would inform the House what was the present amount of the cash balances of the Indian Government, and in what proportion they were held in its home treasury in sterling and in India in rupees:

If he would state how much of the balances held in India in rupees was in the Indian Government's own treasuries, and how much was out on deposit in the Presidency banks.

And, whether he could give the sum now advanced on the money market from the Indian Government's home treasury.

Lord George Hamilton: 1. On the 31st January the cash balances in India amounted to Rx. 11,400,000. The cash balance of the home treasury this morning was £2,099,462.

2. It cannot at present be stated with accuracy how the balances in India on the 31st January were divided between the Government's own treasuries and those of the Presidency banks. The Government deposits in the latter during the last week of January seem, however, to have amounted to about Rx. 2,890,000; and the remainder which would be about Rx. 8,510,000, must have been distributed over the Government treasuries, which are very numerous.

3. The amount now out at short dates on loan from the home treasury is £1,550,000.

THE INDIAN MAILS.

Sir John Leng asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, what number of tenders were received for the Indo-China and Australian mail contracts; whether they were all from British companies:

And, whether both with regard to speed and rates of subsidy, the tender of the Peninsular and Oriental Shipping Company was in all respects the most advantageous.

Mr. R. W. Hanbury: Tenders for the India, China, and Australia mail services, or for portions of them were received from four companies. All the tenders received were from British companies. The only opportunity of obtaining a complete service to and from the whole of the British possessions concerned was to accept offers of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company. When the contracts with these companies are signed, they will be laid before the House for confirmation, and will be accompanied by a Treasury minute giving full particulars of all the tenders received.

March 4th.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE DESAI OF BADAMI.

On the motion of Sir W. Wedderburn, a Return was granted for copy of correspondence relating to a memorial from the Desai of Badami, claiming certain holdings in the Bijapur and Dharwar districts of the Bombay Presidency.

THE IMPERIAL MUSEUM, CALCUTTA.

Mr. M. M. Bhownaggree asked the Secretary of State for India whether a German gentleman was recently appointed to an important position in the Imperial Museum at Calcutta; whether, before filling up that post, the Government of India had made any endeavour to find a native of India competent to fill it; and whether, with reference to this appointment and any other similar appointments to which Indian gentlemen of education and special attainments would seem to justly have the first claim, any correspondence had taken place during the past few years between the Secretary of State for India and the Government in India; and if so, would he place such correspondence upon the Table of the House.

Lord George Hamilton: In the early part of last year the trustees of the Indian Museum at Calcutta, after making inquiries, decided, subject to the approval of the Government of India and of the Secretary of State in Council, to appoint Dr. Bloch for a term of five years to the post of first assistant on account of his very exceptional qualifications for the performance of the special duties attached to it. The Government of India recommended the appointment for approval. The Secretary of State in Council, after careful consideration, decided not to withhold his sanction, but intimated his opinion that the post was one which might appropriately be filled by a qualified native of India, and that in future candidates for such appointments should in the first instance be sought among graduates of the Indian Universities. I shall be ready to lay on the Table the correspondence to which the hon. member refers if he will move for it.

ENTERIC FEVER.

General Russell asked the Secretary of State for India whether his attention had been called to the great increase of enteric fever in India; whether the medical authorities could give any explanation for this increase; and whether the Government proposed to take any steps for the better enforcement of sanitary regulations at the various stations where this complaint had recently been most prevalent.

Lord George Hamilton: I have noticed with regret the increase of enteric fever in India, the causes of which are still very obscure. The Government of India have adopted various measures for improving the sanitation and water supply of cantonments, and the question as to the means of checking this disease is one which is constantly engaging their attention.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.
ARE THERE ANY DEATHS?
THE NESCIENCE OF THE INDIA OFFICE.

Sir William Wedderburn asked the Secretary of State for India whether his attention had been called to the statements of Reuter's Correspondent that in the poorhouse at Nagpur deaths occur daily, and that in one village in the Central Provinces over twenty deaths from actual starvation had occurred before 4th February; and whether he was in possession of any information as to the total deaths from famine up to date.

Lord George Hamilton: I have seen the statements to which the hon. member refers, but they are associated with explanations which are as worthy of attention as the statements themselves. The second set of famine papers, which have been in the hands of the printers for ten days and which will soon be ready, contain all the information I have received regarding famine mortality, including a comparative statement of the total deaths in the Central Provinces from all causes for the years 1895 and 1896.

Mr. J. G. Swift Macneill asked when the noble lord could answer the question, and whether at Nagpur deaths were not occurring daily.

Lord George Hamilton: There must be a lapse of time between the collection of statistics in India and their arrival here, and that cannot be reduced to less than three months. If there is exceptional mortality I have directed the Indian Government to inform me.

Mr. Macneill said he really must press the noble lord as to whether, aye or no, deaths were not taking place at Nagpur daily. [Ministerial cries of "Order."]

The Speaker said the question had already been answered.

THE INDIA COUNCIL.
WANTED: AN INDIAN MEMBER.

Sir William Wedderburn asked the Secretary of State for India whether, in filling up the approaching vacancies in the India Council, he would consider the expediency of appointing an experienced and representative Indian.

Lord George Hamilton: The suggestion which the hon. baronet puts forward is one which I have already considered, but I have not been able to find that association of recent administrative experience and general representation of native views sufficiently combined in one individual to enable me to act upon it.

Sir W. WEDDERBURN asked the Secretary of State whether he had considered the claims of the Indian gentlemen who were members of the Viceroy's Council, or of one of the Provincial Legislative Councils in India.

Lord G. HAMILTON was understood to reply that none of these gentlemen, in his opinion, possessed the requisite qualities for the India Council.

March 8th.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.

IRRIGATION WORKS.

Mr. R. G. WEBSTER asked the Secretary of State for India whether he was in a position to inform the House, having regard to the large sums of public money now being expended in India in relief works, if the Government of India were carrying forward irrigation works of importance in the parts of India now affected by famine for the mitigation or prevention of subsequent scarcity of food in those districts in the future.

Lord GEORGE HAMILTON: In addition to the minor irrigation works which have been recently undertaken in relief of famine, the Government of India are engaged in the construction of very considerable irrigation projects, averaging a capital expenditure of three-quarters of a crore of rupees per annum up to the year 1900. These projects will largely afford protection in the future to the parts now affected by famine, besides affording similar relief in portions of India which have not been affected on this occasion.

THE WRECK OF THE "WARREN HASTINGS."

Captain CHALONER asked the Under Secretary of State for War whether any Report had been received at the War Office of the circumstances attending the wreck of the "Warren Hastings" on the island of Réunion; and whether the Report could be made public.

Mr. BRODRICK: Reports have been received from the officers commanding the wings of the Kings Royal Rifles and the York and Lancaster Regiment and other details on board the "Warren Hastings," and also from the officer commanding the ship. It appears that the ship got out of her course and struck the rocks soon after 2 o'clock on a pitch-dark night. The troops, numbering over 1,000, were mustered at once, and the captain of the ship reports that but for the perfect discipline observed and the prompt obedience to every order given, many lives must necessarily have been lost. I propose to lay the Reports on the Table, and I think the House will feel that the individual acts of heroism in saving life recorded in them, and the perfect order maintained during the landing of the women and children in darkness, with the ship at an angle of fifty degrees and momentarily expected to capsize, are worthy to be recorded in the annals of the regiments and of the British Army. (Cheers.)

March 9th.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.

FOOD GRAINS.

Sir ANDREW SCOBLE asked the Secretary of State for India whether he was able to give the House any information as to the estimated quantity of food grains in local stocks in India in January, 1897; the quantity of food grains imported into British India during the past six months; and the actual or expected out-turn of the rabi or cold weather crops in India during the present season.

Lord GEORGE HAMILTON: The further famine papers which will, I hope, shortly be distributed to hon. members, give the latest information on the topics of my hon. friend's question. Meanwhile I may state: (1) During last month the Government of India reported that visible supplies of food were sufficient for daily requirements throughout India; if failure of stocks were anticipated, prices would rise, but they have not risen. It is not possible to ascertain correctly the amount of food stocks in each famine tract; but, at present, apprehension regarding the sufficiency of food stocks is not felt by the Government of India or the local governments, except in isolated areas of North-East Behar, where the local government has been authorised to take special measures to aid private trade; I have further consulted some of the leading traders in food grains, and they endorse the Government forecast. (2) The latest import figures that have reached me are for last December. During the last three months of 1896, the foreign importations of grain into India were 27,179 tons, as compared with 1,567 tons in the corresponding quarter of 1895. These figures do not include importations from Burma, which has this season an exportable surplus of over 1,600,000 tons of rice. Up to the middle of February, 80,000 tons of the Burma surplus had been shipped to India, and tonnage had been engaged for twenty or thirty thousand more. Knowledge of the Burma surplus was said to be keeping down prices of food in Bengal. (3) Fair spring crops are expected in parts of the Punjab, North-West Provinces, and Oudh. In the Central Provinces, the yield of the spring harvest is poor.

Sir J. KENNAWAY asked whether the noble lord could give any information as to the price of food in the various famine districts at the present time.

Lord GEORGE HAMILTON: Seeing that the country over which the famine extends covers an area over three times as great as that of England, Scotland and Ireland, it would be impossible for me to give information of the kind. But if my hon. friend would give me due notice, I would be able to indicate what the price of food is. For the information of the House I may say that the practice of the Indian Government in famine operations is to pay in money sums sufficient to provide what is known as a sustenance wage, and if the price of food is high, the amount paid is in proportion.

FAMINE RELIEF.

WANTED: ADEQUATE MEASURES.

Mr. LEUTY asked the Secretary of State for India whether, in view of the fact that people in India were admittedly dying of hunger in unknown numbers, and that such a state of things necessarily indicated considerable suffering on the part of others not actually brought to death, he would take immediate steps to make more effective the work of famine relief.

Lord GEORGE HAMILTON: The question of the hon. gentleman implies that the system of famine relief now in operation in India is ineffective and insufficient. No evidence, either official or unofficial, has reached me justifying this allegation. In the middle of last month the Government of India telegraphed that "in all provinces relief arrangements were reported to be adequate and working well." Subsequent telegrams from the Government and unofficial information have confirmed that report. I am not at present aware of any steps that can be taken to make the work of relief more effective; if any such measures can be suggested, they will be welcomed. I believe that the executive in India, their officers, and the large number of non-official workers now engaged in relief operations are doing all that can be done to mitigate distress, and the whole administrative and financial resources of the Government are behind them. A calamity so intense and widespread as that now afflicting India cannot be repelled without casualties and great privation; but, never before in a scarcity of these dimensions, have the general operations against famine been so successful as those now being carried on by Lord Elgin and his coadjutors.

Mr. LEUTY asked whether he correctly understood the noble Lord the other day that three months would be required to find out how many had died from famine, and whether he was right in inferring that people were dying in unknown numbers?

Lord GEORGE HAMILTON: If the hon. gentleman thinks that a calamity of these dimensions could pass over India without raising the mortality above the level which obtains in normal times he stands alone in that opinion. What I pointed out was, it was impossible to obtain in less than three months reliable information as to the mortality that has occurred: and I think it is better the officials administering relief should try and preserve the lives of those living than be burdened by collecting statistics of those who have died. ("Hear!")

Mr. Leuty asked the Secretary of State for India, what relief was being given in the famine districts of India in the matter of payment of the land revenue; and, what steps were being taken to preserve the cattle belonging to the suffering people in view of their future needs.

Lord George Hamilton: My latest information shows that the Government of India expect their land revenue for the year ending on the 31st of this month to be Rx. 2,300,000 short, by reason of suspensions and remissions due to famine. These suspensions are apart from other losses of revenue and from the large sums spent on relief operations and on loans to landholders. The Government forest reserves are being, or have been, opened for grazing wherever such a step was required for the cattle of famine-stricken tracts. In one province a Forest officer of experience has been deputed to help private dealers in making the best use of fodder available in the Government forests. Water from Government irrigation works is being made available—as far as practicable—for the production of fodder crops; and, generally, the governments and the local officers are doing what is in their power to help in saving the people's cattle.

THE "DIAMOND JUBILEE."

Sir John Leng asked the Under Secretary of State for War whether he would consider ths practicability of associating the Crimean and Indian Mutiny veterans with the celebrations in honour of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee by selecting a detachment to form a guard to the children's stand in Hyde Park, or elsewhere, providing each man with a suitable uniform, and giving each a moderate gratuity on the day of the celebration.

Mr. Brodrick: The suggestion in the hon. Member's question will, with many others, be considered; but the selection of men to form such a detachment would present great difficulties, and it is impossible at this stage to give any undertaking in the matter.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCILS FOR THE PUNJAB AND BURMA.

Sir Andrew Scoble asked the Secretary of State for India, whether it was intended to constitute a Lieutenant-Governorship for the province of Burma, and to establish Legislative Councils in the Punjab and Burma;

And, whether he was able to give the House any information as to the constitution and powers of those Councils.

Lord George Hamilton: It has been decided that local Legislative Councils shall be established both for the Punjab and for Burma, and as soon as the formal proclamations have been issued the Chief Commissioner of the latter province will be appointed to be a Lieutenant-Governor.

There will be nine members of Council for each legislature, four of whom will be non-officials. For the present they will all be nominated. The powers to be given to these Councils will be gradually extended, as we gain experience of their working, but it is not proposed in the first instance to give them the larger powers which under the Act of 1892 may be conferred by rule or regulation.

THE BURMA-SIAM-CHINA RAILWAY.

Mr. Schwann asked the Secretary of State for India what action the Government of India had taken, in the fulfilment of the promises given by the Prime Minister, on behalf of the Home and Indian Governments, to the deputation of the Associated Chambers of Commerce in June last, and subsequent memorial of the Chambers, to carry out at State expense the necessary surveys, levels and estimates for the section of the projected Burma-Siam-China Railway leading from the Burmese seaport of Moulmien to the Siamese frontier, in order to enable some powerful and solvent company to undertake and execute this section of the line.

Lord George Hamilton: The statement made by the Prime Minister to the Deputation from the Associated Chambers of Commerce on the 12th June last was to the effect that, if a powerful and solvent company were formed for the suggested Burma-Siam-China Railway, such assistance as was deemed possible by Government would be given towards the construction of that portion of the line which lay in British Indian territory. In pursuance of this undertaking, the views of the Chambers of Commerce in support of the project were transmitted to the Government of India in August last for an expression of their opinion. That Government have recently replied deprecating any expenditure from Indian revenues which might commit them to the execution of this project until the manner in which such a line is to be financed has been discussed and determined.

THE BURMA-CHINESE CONVENTION.

Mr. Schwann asked the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether the new Burma Frontier Treaty provided for the retrocession by China to the British of the Shan State of Kiang Hung, and for the extension of the projected Burma-Siam-China Railway and other railways from our Burmese dominions into the neighbouring provinces of China; and, when the Treaty would be laid upon the Table of the House.

Mr. George Curzon: Under the Burma Frontier Convention, as revised, certain territorial compensations, including the State of Kokang, are made to Great Britain for the violation by the Chinese Government of that portion of the original agreement that related to Kiang Hung. It is further agreed that, if railways be constructed in Yun-nan, they shall be connected with any Burmese lines that may have been laid to the frontier. I cannot at present answer the third question, as the Treaty has not yet reached our hands.

March 11th.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

THE PLAGUE IN INDIA.

Lord Reay expressed his satisfaction with the vigorous measures which had been taken by the local authorities in Bombay to deal with insanitary buildings. This was a very great opportunity for dealing in a thorough manner with the sanitary needs of the city of Bombay, and he trusted that the local authorities would receive all the support and financial aid they deserved in attaining the aim and object which they had at heart. It was under the influence of the prevalent disease that the authorities would naturally enlist more easily that co-operation of those most interested which would facilitate the carrying out of measures which in ordinary times often met with a good deal of opposition. Having noticed that Dr. Yersin had reached Bombay, he ventured to ask the Under Secretary of State for India whether any reports had been received of the results of Dr. Yersin's operations since his arrival, and any steps taken to prepare the Yersin serum in Bombay, and to provide a supply of it to the towns of Poona, Karachi, Surat, and to other localities in which the disease had declared itself; and what further information had been received with reference to Professor Haffkine's inoculations, the degree of protection they afford, and the time during which they remain operative?

The Earl of Onslow: The noble Lord has a very intimate acquaintance with the locality in which the plague unfortunately is now prevalent — namely, the Presidency of Bombay, and I am very glad to hear from his lips that he approves of the steps taken by the Government of Bombay to combat the plague. Steps have not been taken in the town of Bombay only, but equally vigorous measures have been taken in Karachi and Poona, and I can assure the noble lord that the sanction of the Secretary of State will not be refused to any expenditure which may be deemed by the Government of Bombay necessary to combat the plague. With regard to the question the noble lord has addressed to me, I have to say that Dr. Yersin has returned to Bombay, and the only intelligence that we have yet received is that he reached Bombay and began work on March 6th; the effect of his remedy on plague patients only a day or two ill is reported be "surprisingly good," while cases of old standing are said to be "not so much benefited." Information has not yet been received regarding attempts to provide or use Dr. Yersin's or Professor Haffkine's serum at Poona and Karachi. Regarding operations with Professor Haffkine's serum, the following further information has been received. Up to and including March 7, 2,341 persons had been inoculated, of whom only two (in addition to the two described in my answer to the noble Lord on February 15) have been attacked by plague; both attacks occurred within five days of inoculation, and both sufferers are alive. People are coming forward more freely to be inocu-

lated, and the practice is extending. The Government of Bombay are preparing an organisation for the extension of depôts for purposes of inoculation and for instructing medical officers in the process. Steps are also being taken by the Government of Bombay for popularising prophylactic inoculation and for increasing the amount of lymph that can be produced. The Secretary of State will receive information weekly of the extent to which the practice is resorted to, with reports as to its efficacy, and those I shall be willing to furnish the noble lord with from time to time if he should so desire.

Viscount Clifden said their lordships might not know it, but the man who was combating this great disease in Bombay was a German. He believed the man who thought he could combat successfully the cholera was a German, or, at all events, a foreigner. The man who had gone to the the Cape to fight rinderpest was also a German. He knew there were men in England quite as able to do these things as foreigners; it was only a matter of money.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.

THE MANSION HOUSE FUND.

Lord Wenlock asked the Under Secretary of State for India whether he could give any information as to the manner in which the Mansion House Fund had been and would be expended in India; and whether there was ample scope for the beneficial application of the money if the amount subscribed were to reach a figure considerably higher than the present total. Their lordships were aware that the Lord Mayor of London had started what was known as the Mansion House Fund, and had appealed to the public to assist him in raising money for the relief of the distress in India. The public had responded most nobly to the appeal, but it appeared to him it would be a very good thing if the information he asked for could be given, not only for the satisfaction of those who had already responded to the appeal, but of those who were still withholding their subscriptions.

The Earl of Onslow: As to the second question of the noble lord, I can at once answer that there is abundant scope for the employment of such funds. But the noble lord asks me whether I can give him any information as to the way in which the money has been spent by the Committee in India. The noble lord will perhaps have observed that in the Blue Book of Famine Papers which has been presented, the Government of India have laid down the objects to which it is proposed to apply this fund, and we are informed that the Central Committee has applied the money in the manner specified. They have allotted 21 lakhs to provincial committees for urgent demands, and they will make further large distributions shortly. The provincial committees are understood to be working on the lines defined by Government, but are being asked to report their working for the information of the Secretary of State. With regard to the amount which may be required as compared with the amount which has been subscribed, the noble lord is no doubt aware that the Mansion House Fund now amounts to about £411,000. In addition to that, considerable sums have been remitted direct from Lancashire, Glasgow, and other places, and besides that a large subscription has been raised in India. Subscriptions have also been started in the United States, in Canada, and in our Australian colonies. We do not know what amounts those have reached, but no doubt a considerable sum will be collected. But really the whole question of how much is likely to be able to be profitably utilised by the Central Committee depends entirely upon the nature of the next monsoon. If the next monsoon is, as we all hope, a good one, and there is reason for the hope, the amount of the funds which will be provided will be adequate to deal with the emergency. But if it should be otherwise, it is almost impossible to exaggerate or overstate the amount which may be required to provide for so lamentable a contingency. I ought to add that there has not, in these considerations, been taken into account what may be required by the native States, but, excluding that, the Government of India believe that with a good monsoon 140 lakhs—that is, something between £800,000 and £900,000—ought to be sufficient to enable them to cope with the immediate requirements of the situation. But I need hardly assure your lordships that every sixpence which is subscribed by the public, either at home or in our colonies, will be utilised by the Central Committee in India in the re-establishment of some of those unfortunate people, who, after their immediate and pressing necessities have been relieved by the Government of India, will have to be started again in life to pursue their ordinary avocations.

Lord Overtoun asked whether any special effort would be made to secure the co-operation of the missionaries of the various denominations. At the end of the last famine missionaries were asked to undertake the care of orphans. Would anything similar be done on the present occasion?

The Earl of Onslow understood that the Central Committee would gladly welcome the assistance of missionary societies.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE "WARREN HASTINGS."

Mr. James Roche asked the Under Secretary of State for War whether he could give, even approximately, the average length of service of the soldiers on board the *Warren Hastings*, the conspicuous steadiness and discipline of whom, under such trying circumstances, entirely contributed to the immunity from a grave loss of life when that ship was recently wrecked on the island of Réunion.

Mr. Powell-Williams: The average service of the soldiers on board the *Warren Hastings* was probably between four and five years, which is the average of all foreign battalions.

Mr. P. J. Power asked whether it was not a fact that most of the non-commissioned officers and rank and file of this regiment, which displayed such marvellous discipline and steadiness on the occasion referred to, were Irishmen. (Laughter.)

Mr. Powell-Williams said he had no information upon this point.

March 12th.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.

THANKS TO RUSSIA.

Mr. M. M. Bhownaggree asked the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether the thanks of Her Majesty's Government were recently tendered to the Government of the Czar for the help and relief extended by Russia to the people of India in the distress caused by the prevailing famine; and, if so, would he state the amount of money, grain, or any other form of help in which the Russian Government and people were stated to have offered succour to the sufferers.

Mr. G. Curzon: The thanks of Her Majesty's Government have been communicated to the Russian Government for the assistance offered by them in relief of the Indian famine. But we have not as yet received any information as to the amounts of money or grain which they may have despatched to India.

March 16th.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.

PRICES OF GRAIN.

Sir John Kennaway asked the Secretary of State for India whether, seeing that the Viceroy had stated that the whole course of operations in relief of famine must depend largely on the course of prices, he would arrange with the Indian Government to give in its weekly telegram the prices of different grains in two or three chief towns in the worst part of the famine districts, *e.g.*, for Bengal, Mohkhari and Durbhanga; for Central Provinces, Jabalpur, and Raipur:

Whether he would state the nature of the special measures to aid private trade which the Government of Bengal had been authorised to take in Behar:

And what action had been already taken to carry them out.

Lord George Hamilton: I have asked the Government of India to add to its weekly telegram a statement of the price of the commonest food grain at one or two places in each famine-stricken provinces.

A general account of special measures the Bengal Government proposed for stimulating grain trade in a few remote localities will be found in the Famine Papers which, I hope, will be presented within the next ten days. The authority for special measures was only to take effect in case of probable failure of supplies.

I have learned from the *Bengal Gazette*, received to-day, that one case of emergency has been reported in Chota Nagpur, but I am not yet able to state the precise procedure adopted by the Government to supplement the food supplies in this district.

March 18th.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

HEALTH OF THE TROOPS.

East India (Contagious Diseases).—Copy presented—of Report of a Departmental Committee on the prevalence of Venereal Disease among the British Troops in India (by command); to lie upon the Table.

East India (Contagious Diseases) [No. 2, 1897].—Copy presented—of Memorandum by the Army Sanitary Commission and Correspondence regarding the prevalence of Venereal Disease among the British Troops in India (by command); to lie upon the Table.

THE BEHAR OPIUM AGENCY.

Mr. Arthur Pease asked the Secretary of State for India whether the Government had any information as to the progress made by the Government of India in arranging that the Behar Opium Agency should deal directly with the cultivators of opium instead of dealing through middlemen.

Lord George Hamilton: The subject to which the hon. member refers has not been lost sight of by the Government of India, but I have received no information about it beyond what is contained in the Annual Report on the Administration of the Opium Department for 1895-6. I shall be glad to place a copy of this Report at the disposal of the hon. member for perusal if he wishes it.

HEALTH OF THE TROOPS.

Captain Norton (on behalf of Captain Pirie) asked the Secretary of State for India whether he was now able to state the approximate date when the Report of the Departmental Committee on the Health of the Army in India would be placed in the hands of members; and if he could state the reasons for the delay in its publication.

Lord George Hamilton: I am laying the Report on the Table to-day, and hope that it will be distributed to-morrow.

Major Rasch asked the First Lord of the Treasury whether, on the Report of the Departmental Committee on the Health of the British troops in India, the Government would give facilities for its discussion.

Mr. A. J. Balfour: In answer to my right hon. friend, I have to ask him if he will defer his question until he has had an opportunity of reading the Blue-book, which will be in his hands in a few days.

ENTERIC FEVER.

Sir Herbert Maxwell asked the Under Secretary of State for War whether the attention of his Department had been called to the sufferings of the Black Watch at Sabathu, in the Punjab, from the deficient and contaminated water supply, and consequent prevalence of enteric fever:

Whether any steps were being taken to improve the water supply at that station and Dagshai:

And whether Kasauli, Solon, and Jutogh, where the water supply had been improved, were now completely free from enteric fever.

Lord George Hamilton: It appears from the monthly returns, which have been received up to November last, that enteric fever prevailed in the regiment during April, May, and June, increased in July, August, and September, but diminished greatly in October, while no cases were reported in November.

The Report as to the health of British troops for the year 1896 has not yet reached me, but I will ask the Government of India to expedite it, and also to furnish information as to the water supply of the stations named.

March 22nd.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE FAMINE AND THE PLAGUE.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

East India (Famine and Relief Operations).—Copy presented—of further Papers on the Famine and Relief Operations in India in 1896-7 (by command); to lie upon the Table.

East India (Bubonic Plague).—Copy presented—of Papers relating to the outbreak of Bubonic Plague in India, with Statement showing the quarantine and other restrictions recently placed upon Indian trade up to March, 1897 (by command); to lie upon the Table.

"ECCLESIASTICAL" PURPOSES.

Mr. Herbert Roberts asked the Secretary of State for India whether he would state the amount drawn annually from the taxation of India for the maintenance of Christian ecclesiastic establishments in that country:

Whether he could give any reasons why the charges of these churches, which exist for the benefit of the English community, should be borne by the taxpayers of India:

And whether, in view of the strain now put upon Indian finances by the famine, he would consider the advisibility of devoting the money referred to to purposes of general service of the country.

Lord George Hamilton: The total charge upon Indian Revenues for ecclesiastical purposes was Rx. 220,000 in 1895-6, of which sum by far the greater part was spent in pay and establishments for chaplains of various denominations serving with the Army. It has for 200 years been held, and is still held, by the Government of India to be a part of their duty to provide religious ministrations, within reasonable limits, for the European Army in India and for European civilians serving in that country. Both these classes have accepted employment in the expectation and belief that such provision would be made; and there is no intention of making any change in the present arrangements.

Mr. Carvell Williams: Will a Return be granted of the details of this expenditure if asked for?

Lord George Hamilton: Yes, Sir.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.

SUGGESTED GRANT IN AID.

Mr. Buchanan asked the Secretary of State for India whether, in view of the statement made by Sir James Westland as to the cost of the famine and its effects on the finances of India, he could state in what way the Government were prepared to aid in defraying from Imperial funds part of the expenditure on famine relief.

Lord George Hamilton: The state of things in India is at present as follows. In the face of a famine of almost unexampled extent and severity, the Government of India have spared no expense in their efforts to prevent or mitigate its effects; and, thanks to the means which the foresight of previous Governments has provided, and to the zeal and vigour with which they have been used, those efforts have been on the whole very successful. In spite of the very heavy charge and loss of revenue, estimated at Rx. 11,000,000 net, which this condition of affairs has entailed, the Government of India estimate the deficit for the closing financial year at not more than Rx. 1,987,000, and that for the coming year at Rx. 2,464,000. They propose to carry on without interruption or postponement all the great Public Works which they have begun or have undertaken to begin; and mainly for this purpose of productive expenditure, which is virtually a further insurance against future famines, they propose to borrow Rx. 4,000,000 in India and £3,500,000 sterling in England, besides £1,000,000 temporary debt. With the view of insuring against the financial loss involved by possible famines, a surplus revenue has for many years been raised and devoted to the avoidance or reduction of debt, and the loans which it is

now intended to incur form part of the general policy of borrowing for remunerative railway construction, and must not be attributed merely, or even mainly, to the results of the famine. The credit of the Government of India has, I believe, never been appreciably higher than at the present moment. In these circumstances, no application for assistance has been made by the Government of India, nor do Her Majesty's Government, as at present advised, see any reason to anticipate such application by an offer of financial aid.

THE HEALTH OF THE TROOPS.

Major RASCH asked the First Lord of the Treasury whether, on the Report of the Departmental Committee on the health of the British troops in India, the Government would give facilities for its discussion.

Mr. A. J. BALFOUR: I have, with much regret, asked my hon. and gallant friend more than once to put off this question, and I am afraid I must ask him again to postpone it until Thursday, when I hope the Government will be able to make a statement on the subject. (Cheers.)

March 25th.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE SIMLA EXODUS.

Mr. C. E. SCHWANN, on behalf of Sir WILLIAM WEDDERBURN, asked the Secretary of State for India, whether he was aware that the Government of India was about to migrate from Calcutta to Simla:

And, whether any steps would be taken by which, as in former famines, the Viceroy might take personal cognizance of the measures of famine relief in the different Provinces.

Lord G. HAMILTON: I am aware that the Government of India is about to migrate to Simla, from which place the Viceroy will be in no less rapid and easy communication with the officers in the famine districts than if he were at Calcutta. I may add that, owing to the publication of the famine codes, which established general principles for the administration of relief, the intervention of the supreme Government is not now required, as it was in former famines.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.

WAGES ON RELIEF WORKS.

Mr. C. E. SCHWANN, on behalf of Sir WILLIAM WEDDERBURN, asked the Secretary of State for India, whether he was aware that there was a general complaint in India that the wages paid to labourers on relief works were insufficient to secure to them one full meal every day:

And, whether, to test the sufficiency of the wages, he would direct that labourers admitted to relief works should be weighed at the time of admission, and should subsequently be weighed from time to time.

Lord G. HAMILTON: I am not aware of any general complaint as to the insufficiency of the wages paid to labourers on relief works. The famine codes prescribe the rates of wages, which bear a fixed proportion to the local value of food, and rise and fall with it. These rates are intended, as recommended in the report of the Famine Commission, to "provide sufficient food for a labourer's or a dependent's support," with "a margin against accidental error on the side of deficiency." I am also aware that the local Governments and local officers are carefully watching the effect of the wages rates on the condition of the people receiving relief, and the weekly reports state the general condition of those upon relief work as good and fair The hon. gentleman can hardly be serious in suggesting that in addition to the immense labours devolving upon relief officers should be added the duty of periodically weighing the three millions of men, women, and children who are now in receipt of relief from Government. (Laughter.)